

How can opioids be **USED SAFELY?**

- Make sure both you and your health care provider agree that in your situation, the potential benefits of opioids outweigh the potential harms.
- If you are taking opioids for acute pain, you should be prescribed the lowest possible dose for the shortest possible period of time.
- Discuss with your health care provider the plan for monitoring your pain, side effects as well as alternatives to pain medication.
- Store your opioids safely. Consider locking them up and keep them away from other people in your home.
- Dispose of unused or expired opioids safely. Bring them back to any pharmacy or ask a health care provider how to dispose of them.
- Never share your opioid medications with others.
- Do not mix your medication with other drugs (prescribed or over-the-counter) without consulting your health care provider.
- Do not take your medication with alcohol or street drugs.
- If opioids make you feel sleepy, don't drive or operate machinery until the effect has worn off.
- If you are pregnant or think you might be, talk with your health care provider.

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Prescription Pain Medication:

Know the potential risks
of opioid use



For more information:

Talk to your pharmacist or other health care provider and visit [Ontario.ca/Opioids](https://www.ontario.ca/Opioids)

Drug and Alcohol Helpline

1-800-565-8603

[drugandalcoholhelpline.ca](https://www.drugandalcoholhelpline.ca)

Mental Health Helpline

1-866-531-2600





WHAT IS a prescription opioid?

Prescription opioids are used to treat pain and come in different forms including pills, patches and liquid. Even if taken as prescribed, they can lead to dependence or addiction. If not used as directed, opioids may lead to an overdose.

Some common opioid medications include:

- codeine
- morphine
- fentanyl
- methadone
- oxycodone (e.g. Percocet)
- tramadol (e.g. Tramacet)
- hydromorphone (e.g. Dilaudid)

What are opioids USED FOR?

When used as prescribed, opioids can be an effective option for treating:

- Short-term (acute) moderate to severe pain from surgery, an injury, etc.
- Some forms of long-term (chronic) pain, for some people, with close monitoring
- Severe cough

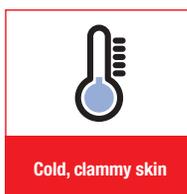
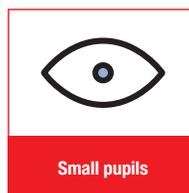
What are the SIGNS OF OPIOID ADDICTION?

Some signs you might be developing an opioid addiction include:

- You take more of your prescription than prescribed by your doctor.
- You take your prescription in a different way than intended (e.g. crushing your pills, seeking euphoric “high”) or you get opioids from friends, family or others.
- You have experienced withdrawal symptoms including muscle aches, nausea, insomnia, intense anxiety, yawning, abdominal cramps, runny nose, tears, diarrhea and cravings for the opioid.

What are the SIGNS OF AN OVERDOSE?

Overdoses can occur very quickly or develop more slowly over a period of a few hours.



WHO MAY BE AT HIGHER RISK of becoming addicted to opioids?

Anyone can become addicted to opioids, but you are at a higher risk if you:

- Have ever had a problem with substance use, including alcohol, prescription drugs or street drugs.
- Have a family history of addiction.
- Have a history of mental illness, including mood disorders such as depression and anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder and/or a history of other traumas.

What is NALOXONE?

Naloxone is a drug that can temporarily reverse an opioid overdose. You can get a free naloxone kit as well as training on how and when to use naloxone at participating:

- **Ontario pharmacies**
You don't need a prescription, just your Ontario health card number.
- **Community organizations**
You don't need a prescription or an Ontario health card number.

Find a participating pharmacy or community organization in your area at Ontario.ca/OpioidOverdose